



The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP

Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

MC12-010078

Mr Shayne Neumann MP
Chair
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
Member for Blair
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

13 NOV 2012

Dear Mr Neumann

Thank you for your letter of 24 September 2012, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

I welcome the opportunity to provide a submission regarding how programs within the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations portfolio contribute to the wellbeing and mentoring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders through sport.

Under the terms of reference of the Committee, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations administers three programs of relevance to the inquiry, the Sporting Chance program, the No School No Play program and the Learn.Earn.Legend! program.

The Sporting Chance program is an Australian Government initiative that uses sport and recreation as a vehicle to increase the level of engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their schooling. The program is implemented by providers working together with schools, education authorities, sporting bodies, businesses and community groups. The No School No Play program seeks to engage team-based sporting codes associations to promote school attendance.

Through partnerships with sporting organisations the Learn.Earn.Legend! program advocates the importance of education, training and employment to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

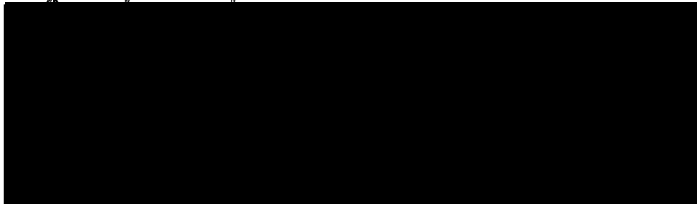
Also of fundamental relevance is the development of a national health and physical education curriculum which is expected to be finalised in late 2013. This curriculum will deliver the critical health and wellbeing learning that all students in Australian schools require, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Further detail about how each of these initiatives contributes to the wellbeing and mentoring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and work being undertaken in relation to meeting Closing the Gap targets is contained in the submission attached.

Officers from the Department would be pleased to meet with members of your Committee to discuss this submission in detail if required. Ms Renae Houston, Branch Manager of the Student and Parent Engagement Branch can be contacted via email at [REDACTED] or by phone on [REDACTED].

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute a submission detailing some of the valuable work being undertaken by my Department to improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Yours sincerely

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Peter Garrett



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing and mentoring by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

Submission by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has a number of programs that use sport, and other activities such as dance and performing arts, to improve educational and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

The focus of these programs from an educational perspective is on improving young people's engagement with education so that they gain a Year 12 or equivalent qualification. From an employment perspective, the focus is on improving participation in education so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are skilled, confident and competitive when entering the labour force, and on providing access to employment opportunities, ideally through sustained employment.

DEEWR's sporting programs (Academies and Engagement Strategies, No School No Play and Learn Earn Legend) are all education and employment engagement policy interventions that are designed to improve the engagement of Indigenous students by improving attendance and active engagement in learning that seek ultimately to achieve improved employment outcomes.

These programs do not seek to produce elite sports men and women. They use sport as a hook to improve the educational outcomes and employment prospects of all participants as a contribution to closing the gap in the participation of Indigenous people in social and economic life and often in locations where the gaps are at their greatest.

Indigenous Australians have high rates of participation in sport, making this a potentially powerful vehicle for engaging Indigenous communities in addressing challenging educational and employment issues by addressing personal and community issues. Along with Sport, Art forms such as song, dance and painting, coupled with ceremony, are integral to cultural continuity and maintenance in Indigenous Australian communities.

The effects of arts, sports and recreation programs in improving Indigenous education and employment outcomes can be powerful and transformative but are generally indirect. These programs tend to reduce juvenile anti-social behaviour and largely work through diversion by providing alternative safe opportunities for adolescent risk taking which preserves social status, as well as opportunities to build healthy relationships with Elders and links with culture.

We do know that providing a quality artistic or sporting experience heightens engagement in education and the development of employment aspirations for many young Indigenous people. Linking arts, sports and recreation programs with other services like health or counselling and opportunities through more relevant education/training programs or jobs can improve the uptake of other services required to improve health and wellbeing outcomes and generate behavioural change.

For artistic and sporting programs, providing long-term regular contact between arts/sports professionals and participants allows time to solidify new skills and the benefits that flow from involvement. For some recreation programs providing short-term and intense programs can be more effective for achieving reductions in anti-social behaviour.

Where Indigenous students have disengaged from school, sports and music or theatre activities have frequently been used to successfully re-engage them – i.e. to reconnect them to education and improve attendance, retention at school and academic achievement. Arts participation can also improve young people's engagement with their peers which is an important intermediary to increased engagement with school.

Participation in these programs has also been shown to improve a range of cognitive and social skills that form a critical platform for higher learning. These include self-discipline, goal setting, cooperation, conflict resolution and problem solving. Similarly, participation in arts, sports and recreation programs can lead to economic development through direct training in specific job skills (e.g. performing arts, arts administration and sports coaching) or indirectly by encouraging increased tourism. Participants are also exposed to a range of experiences that can open up career pathways that can spark interest in seeking out formal career advice which can assist in their successful transition to adult life. This broad exposure to possibilities can also raise aspirations and act as another motivator to continue with education or training or to consider other employment options.

Accomplished artists, sportspeople and senior community members can also provide positive role models and sound mentoring for Indigenous students. Indigenous Australian cultures tend to have observational learning styles, which are facilitated in arts, sports and recreation programs in a highly effective manner. Young people are able to observe, and then emulate behaviours to which they aspire. For example, a coach who is genuinely caring yet disciplined can provide a model to which young people can aspire.

However, direct causal claims about the extent of the benefits to closing the gap are problematic. The benefits of these policy interventions are often diffuse, long-term and difficult to measure with precision. Measurements of outcomes and impacts therefore tend to be indirect and need to be considered along with broader measures to improve Indigenous education and employment outcomes, such as the National Goals for schooling, a number of National Partnership Agreements, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan as well as the impact of the National Indigenous Employment policies and programs.

The inclusion of Health and Physical Education in the development of the National Curriculum recognises universally that health is fundamental to giving children the best start in life so they can reach their full potential at school.

SPORTING CHANCE PROGRAM

The Sporting Chance Program is a \$43m Australian Government initiative (2009–12) that uses sport and recreation as a vehicle to increase the level of engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their schooling. The program was implemented in 2007, and has produced successful outcomes in increasing levels of educational engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across Australia.

The objective of the program is to encourage improved educational outcomes. Outcomes may include:

- strengthened engagement with school and improved attitudes to schooling;
- an increase in school attendance;
- improved achievement in learning;
- increased retention to Year 12 or its equivalent;
- increased capacity to make informed decisions about post-school pathways; and
- greater parental and community involvement with the school and students' schooling.

There are two elements to the Sporting Chance Program:

- **School-based sports academies** (59 projects) – innovative, intensive and high-quality, weekly support using sport and recreation activities to engage students in learning and development. Academies are targeted at secondary students only and currently targets around 6150 participants.
- **Education Engagement Strategies** (5 projects) - a range of sport and recreation-based activities to engage students in education in remote communities (less intensive – a few visits per community a year). Education Engagement Strategies are targeted at remote primary and secondary students. Currently this element targets around 6220 students.

Women

It needs to be understood that not everyone, however, is interested in the arts or in sports, so having only one option may limit the involvement of those not interested or not skilled, thereby contributing to increased social exclusion. The Sporting Chance program therefore offers a menu of engagement activity beyond sport. A range of activities allows everyone to participate fully in ways that are most effective in engaging them.

The arts, sports and recreation play an important role in any culture, society or local community and so too Indigenous communities. There are clear links between these activities and improved physical and mental wellbeing as well as with improved social cohesion and inclusion. The enjoyment generated by active or passive participation in these activities is both intrinsically beneficial, and a powerful 'hook' for engaging communities in programs with other social or personal development objectives.

In Indigenous communities in particular, there are additional reasons why arts, sports and recreation programs play an important role and are a cost-effective means for supporting healthy communities. The arts have an integral role in the maintenance and transmission of Indigenous culture, and in maintaining links to country through kinship and song for example. This is especially important, given the disruption to cultural continuity experienced in most Indigenous communities.

In remote communities, there is often limited infrastructure to provide leisure and other pursuits which at times leads to engagement in unhealthy or negative activities. This is particularly acute among youth, but also affects adults. Providing sports and recreation programs can be useful in building a sense of purpose, hope and belonging in these communities. In regional and urban areas too where Indigenous individuals and communities are in the minority, these activities provide an opportunity for improved social inclusion. Participation in these activities is also seen as a protective factor against substance abuse, self-harm and other negative behaviours. Additionally, the design of these programs incorporates community involvement and consultation, including parents.

Using local Indigenous languages and linking programs to Country facilitates deeper engagement and allows local values and wisdom to be incorporated into programs. Ensuring stable funding and staffing is crucial to developing sustainable programs, as is involving the community in program planning and implementation, which in turn promotes cultural appropriateness, engagement and sustainability. The programs often provide a platform from which greater Indigenous community engagement in education can translate into broader community benefits by improving wellbeing and strengthening Indigenous culture and identity.

Engagement programs contribute to halving the gap for Indigenous children in reading, writing and numeracy achievement, halving the gap for Indigenous people in Year 12 attainment and halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Although the word 'sport' is used, the Sporting Chance Program is foremost an education engagement program. When first implemented the program primarily used sport as the lure to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their schooling. Since that time providers have taken a holistic approach to engaging students in their schooling and deliver a variety of activities such as connecting to culture initiatives, dance classes, community engagement programs and the like. As the program has grown, providers have found that combining sporting and non-sporting activities achieves the greatest outcomes for the students.

The school-based sports academies are an intensive element of the program with academy staff and students working together on a weekly basis. The staff who are delivering the program act as mentors for the students, providing one on one support to engage or re-engage with their schooling. They also provide social and emotional support to students that are at risk of disengaging from school.

On average, providers operating school-based sports academies are spending up to 3 hours per week on delivering sporting activities. This includes participating in weekend competitions and training sessions. They are also providing up to 9 hours a week on activities such as:

- behaviour and leadership camps;
- mentoring programs;
- cultural activities (art, music and dance);
- reward excursions;
- access and support to complete VET courses; and
- employment expos.

Due to the less intensive nature of the Education Engagement Strategy projects which may visit a school a few times a year rather than on a weekly basis it is difficult to establish time spent on each activity. Providers tend to combine sport and other activities in the one day using sport specific role models.

DEEWR collects attendance data, general literacy and numeracy improvement data and case studies. It is not possible to establish causal links between the contribution of sport to specific improvements in educational outcomes for Indigenous students participating in the program. The data does however show that participation in the program is a contributing factor in improving the educational outcomes of those Indigenous students through improved attendance and more active engagement in learning.

Executive Summary of the Evaluation

The objective of the Sporting Chance Program is to encourage improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (boys and girls) using sport and recreation. Such outcomes may include an increase in school attendance, strengthened engagement with school and improved attitudes to schooling, improved achievement in learning, increased retention to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and greater parental and community involvement with the school and students' schooling.

The program has been implemented with providers working together with schools, education authorities, sporting bodies, businesses and community groups. Providers who deliver school-based sports academies are required to source partnership contributions. The Commonwealth funding leverages state and territory funding as well as corporate funding.

There is no single model for delivery of the projects and providers must consult with students, parents, participating schools and communities in the development of the project. Students must have an interest in the activities on offer for the program to be successful. In many of the Sporting Chance Program projects sport is often seen as a reward activity for the students, for example, students must maintain an average attendance rate of 85 per cent to participate. Where the students' interest in sport is minimal then other activities are substituted as the reward.

Currently 21 providers deliver the Sporting Chance Program across Western Australia, Northern Territory, South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland. Only three of the 21 providers are sporting organisations.

In December 2010, DEEWR contracted the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to evaluate the extent to which the Sporting Chance Program was meeting its objective. ACER conducted the evaluation of the Sporting Chance Program from January to June 2011.

Evaluation Findings

The purpose of the evaluation was to identify the extent to which the program is meeting its' objective.

The evaluation concluded that the Sporting Chance Program is meeting its' objective, although the activities that are offered are broader than 'sport and recreation'. ACER identified that highly skilled, culturally aware and dedicated staff members are one of the most effective characteristics of an effective Sporting Chance Program project.

As part of the evaluation, 1012 students who were participating in a Sporting Chance Program project in 2011, were surveyed and interviewed. The data collected identified a gradual shift in focus from sport to school engagement. Primary school students indicated that they enjoyed playing sport and learning new sporting skills whereas the senior secondary students indicated that they were less focussed on sport and more focussed on school attendance and developing new skill in areas such as mentoring and leadership.

The full report can be accessed via the Sporting Chance Program website at www.deewr.gov.au/Indigenous/Schooling/Programs/SportingChance/Pages/default.aspx

Program Findings

Reporting under the Sporting Chance Program funding agreement concentrates on activities and outcomes relevant to the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in their schooling.

The program comprises two elements:

- School based Sports Academies (Academies) for secondary school students; and
- Education Engagement Strategies (EES) for both primary and secondary school students.

The purpose of the research is to evaluate the extent to which the Sporting Chance Program has achieved its objective. The findings from the evaluation support the conclusion that the Sporting Chance Program is meeting its objective, although the activities that are offered are broader than 'sport and recreation'.

More than 90 per cent of the 1012 students surveyed and interviewed as part of the evaluation reported a positive attitude toward their schooling, particularly in relation to their attitudes to school, self-identity, sense of pride in being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and self-efficacy as learners.

The professional judgement of teachers and principals reinforces this conclusion, suggesting that the Sporting Chance Program is having a moderate (positive) impact on students in relation to attendance, engagement, achievement, retention and parental/community involvement. 'Moderate' here means that these teachers assess the Sporting Chance Program as having led to improvements which are identifiable as uniquely due to the program but that there remains scope for further improvement. The degree and nature of improvement and hence the scope for further improvement varies across projects and schools. Indeed, the use of more systematic measures, in particular post-school destination data, would assist in getting a clearer picture of its impact.

Attendance and engagement: In surveys and interviews schools and providers report improved attendance and engagement in school for students in both the school-based sports Academies and Education Engagement Strategies although the sustainability of this engagement is more evident in the Academies than in the EES projects. Attendance data need careful use; there are different kinds of absence – for example, illness, cultural, unexplained – and these should be taken into account in any data collected for administrative purposes.

Learning achievement: The evaluation does not show that, as a result of self-reported views on changes in attitude, attendance and engagement, learning achievement outcomes have improved. In general there is insufficient evidence to show a clear link between Academy or EES participation and improved academic outcomes. Some schools report improved attainment in classroom achievement, such as students gaining higher grades in their work for some subjects or doing better in literacy and/or numeracy activities, but the data for this are inconclusive.

Retention: While not all Academies are in a position to show improved retention rates to Year 12 (for example, some have only been operating for a short period or have focused their efforts on younger students and will need more time for these students to move through the school)

others have successfully supported students to attain a range of certificates, including Year 12 qualifications, as shown in surveys, interviews and information provided during school visits.

Parental and community involvement: Schools in both Academies and EES projects report increased levels of parental and community involvement in the school although this is not as strong as for other performance areas, such as attendance and engagement. There is scope for further community involvement in the provision of post-school support to help students make a successful transition to work or further study.

As part of the evaluation of the Sporting Chance Program, ACER undertook a review of the literature on student engagement and the link between student engagement in school, attitude to school, and attendance and educational outcomes. The review found considerable variation in the way engagement is understood and measured. The findings of the evaluation suggest there are four key components of student engagement in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students: (a) positive self-identity, (b) belonging (both cultural and group), (c) participation and (d) attendance.

The literature review shows there are gaps in the research regarding the nature and strengths of the links between engagement and particular educational outcomes. The findings of the evaluation, consistent with the literature, indicate that while the Academies in particular are contributing to improved attendance and engagement, there is not yet clear evidence linking this to improved academic attainment.

There are other benefits to flow from the Sporting Chance Program. Families have expressed pride in their children's participation and performance in the program. Project providers and school staff have referred to the professional and personal satisfaction gained from seeing the positive changes that occur in student confidence, self esteem, behaviour, attendance and engagement in learning.

The most striking endorsement of the Sporting Chance Program has come from the students themselves. Over 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students provided feedback on their experiences in the Academies and EES projects. They describe what they have learned, what they like most about the Academy or EES, and the difference these experiences have made to them.

Both the Academies and EES projects are successful in engaging students in school but the very nature of the EES activities mean that the impact is likely to be short-term rather than sustained.

Effective Academies are characterised by:

- highly skilled, enthusiastic, culturally aware and dedicated staff members who are capable of building strong and trusted relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- willingness to engage communities in the planning and processes well before the program is implemented;
- strong support from the school leadership, other teachers and parents/carers;

- an integrated curriculum;
- effective communication between provider and school, school and community, provider and community;
- sufficient resourcing and funding, including the provision of an environment – such as a designated Academy room – in which students can feel safe and comfortable and where parents and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff feel comfortable;
- strong external relationships, such as with community and business organisations, tertiary providers and potential funders, who can provide the Academy with additional financial and in-kind support and mentoring;
- a strong perception (and promotion of) the Sporting Chance Program as an education program and not primarily as a sports program; and
- recognition of the need to monitor and evaluate their programs.

Effective EES projects are characterised by:

- highly skilled (that is, appropriately qualified, trained and/or experienced), enthusiastic, culturally aware and dedicated staff who can engage with students
- consistent and regular delivery, without too much time occurring between visits
- a positive relationship with the school
- effective communication, including allowing sufficient time for schools to prepare for the arrival of the EES staff and mentors

Other findings

Providers were asked about the usefulness of DEEWR's Sporting Chance Guidelines in delivering their projects and, for Academy projects, the importance of the Advisory Committee as a source of support. They were also asked to nominate any particular issues with a view to identifying areas in which the Sporting Chance Program might be enhanced. The most commonly identified source of support from providers was not so much the Guidelines or the Advisory Committees but the workshop for providers which allows them to share experiences and ideas to improve their own projects.

Unintended consequences

There have been several unintended consequences (both positive and negative) arising from participation in the Sporting Chance Program. The evidence for this is mainly anecdotal. The Academies have both positive and negative unintended consequences while the EES projects have positive ones.

Positive

One outcome identified in surveys, interviews and small group discussions with Academy project providers, principals, staff, parents and community members, and supported by student responses in interviews and surveys, was an increase in self esteem (typically expressed as students 'feeling good' about themselves) and self confidence as a result of being in the project.

Project providers (in interviews), principals and staff (in surveys) were asked if anything had surprised them about the Sporting Chance Program in their school. Of the 28 staff and principals who reported being surprised by an aspect of the projects, 22 reported they underestimated the benefits of the program, and six the speed of the benefits arising from the project. Seven staff members admitted to being pleasantly surprised by what their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have been able to achieve. Four teachers and principals commented on the professional learning gained from (both Academy and EES) projects although the nature of this was not defined.

Negative

There were few unintended negative consequences arising from participation in the Sporting Chance Program. One was identified as an occasional resentment from others in the school community at the opportunities being given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Several schools also reported a similar response from girls in regard to the disproportionate opportunities being given to boys through boys' only Academies and, in one case, by boys to a girls' only Academy. Overall, the Sporting Chance Program, despite some limitations, is doing what it has set out to do – to encourage improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Case Study 1 - Clontarf Foundation

The Clontarf Foundation uses Australian Rules Football (AFL) as the hook to attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys to school, engage them in learning and to fulfill Clontarf's aim of improving the education, discipline, life skills, self esteem and employment prospects of young Aboriginal men, and by doing so equip them to participate meaningfully in society. The Clontarf Foundation uses the same Academy model in each school. Academy staff place great emphasis on the importance of attendance and appropriate in-school behaviour and provide practical support to the boys in helping them achieve acceptable standards in both.

The Clontarf Foundation operates 33 Academies in 46 schools. The projects offers a wide range of student activities such as camps, excursions, leadership and team building, health and hygiene, goal setting, guest speakers and workplace visits. The focus is on these types of activities rather than sport as such. This diverse mix of activities is designed to engage the boys by creating an attractive, safe, welcoming and supportive environment. During these activities, the development of a sense of belonging and of trusted relationships with peers and Clontarf staff, establishes a foundation upon which engagement in school becomes achievable. While some activities are incentives for school attendance, academic effort, general good standing and positive behaviours, many activities are delivered to engage some of the most 'at-risk' and disengaged students who would not otherwise attend school. Camps and excursions are generally incentive-based engagement tools that are also flexible depending on the needs of students. For example, one school described the Clontarf approach to camps and excursions in this way:

Often camps are identified as being personal development activities enabling the Clontarf staff to make decisions to take some students who may have demonstrated a recent improvement in one or more areas e.g. behaviour. This has proven to be an effective way to encourage students to sustain the improvement over a longer period

of time and recognises that for some students there is a need for instant positive reinforcement for any improvement. It also provides an opportunity for staff to work students outside of the school environment.

Clontarf staff induct students into the Academy, help students with their subject selection and participate in a range of support activities, either helping in a whole class situation or withdrawing small groups or individual students to work on a one-on-one basis. Clontarf staff members accompany students on excursions and out-of-school activities and contribute to the planning and integration of learning activities associated with these extracurricular activities. They provide homework classes and tutoring for students and, if needed, will help students get to and from school each day.

Clontarf staff also work across the community to support students in community-based activities and liaising with families. Community-based activities include students visiting primary schools to mentor young students, assisting in National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Observance Committee week activities or sporting carnivals at primary and regional schools, umpiring football carnivals for younger students or female students, undertaking community service volunteering and representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at conferences and functions.

Characteristics of project

The Clontarf Academies recruit and employ their own staff. Staff members live locally, work full time in the local Academy and are accessible to students at any time.

Clontarf staff take a holistic approach to supporting each student and develop a thorough understanding of their personal circumstances. Across all Clontarf Academies in 45 schools, the Foundation employs 125 staff at a ratio of around one full time staff member to 25 boys including eight dedicated Employment Officers around the regions who work with graduates to secure work or training post-school. Clontarf employs 12 staff at their Central Office.

The Clontarf Academies provide up to 50 contact hours per week with students (this includes not only day-to-day school contact but before and after school, lunchtimes, camps, workplace visits, community visits). Each school has its own Academy room.

The Clontarf Academies have access to school resources, such as a bus (in some locations), computers, and sports equipment but also have their own resources to draw on.

The Academy activities are part of the normal school week. Clontarf students spend most of their time in the Academy room before school, recess, lunchtime and after school. Contact time for each year group exists during the school timetable each week. The school remains responsible for the delivery of the academic education program.

The Academy provides literacy and numeracy support including one-on-one tutoring where required. Clontarf staff liaise with school teachers to ensure that the individual

needs of each student are met in terms of the delivery of education. In some cases, Clontarf staff work in the classroom as well as after-school homework classes and Academy time for students to catch up on school work.

Academy support for post-school pathways includes an integrated employment program which creates an expectation that all graduates will find meaningful work. The program involves work experience activities, attendance at TAFE, employment readiness, drivers' licences, Tax File Number, resumes, mock-interviews, guest speakers, employment forums and workplace visits, and introducing students to potential employers which can provide a pathway to work.

Mentoring and support of students post-school continues with Clontarf Employment Officers having regular contact with graduates in their workplace or training environment. The employment program commences when the students are first engaged in the Academy. Throughout their years in the Academy, students are exposed to many different industries, companies and jobs via workplace visits, guest speakers, career counselling and work readiness activities. Work experience and school based traineeships are a regular feature of the Academy programs. Clontarf staff work with the school VET coordinators to ensure Aboriginal School Based Training Programs work effectively.

Clontarf staff members maintain regular contact with parents, including conducting regular home visits. This is a strong feature of the Clontarf model.

Case Study 2 – Role Models and Leaders Australia

Role Models & Leaders Australia is based in Western Australia and delivers seven girls' Academies and an Education Engagement Strategy project. The focus of the Academy projects is on engaging girls in education using sport as a hook but also catering for girls who are not interested in sport by giving them healthy options. The program also has a focus on mentoring; sports and extra-curricular activities; work placement & work readiness; and leadership, teamwork and vision development. The Academies are designed to be delivered through the curriculum. Mentors work with the girls and the project works best when it is embedded in the curriculum.

Characteristics of the project:

Each of the Academies operates from a common framework of operation but vary to accommodate the needs of the girls and schools in each location.

Each Academy operates under the guidance of a Program Manager and a number of Development Officers depending on the number of girls enrolled. In general, Academies with 65 enrolments are managed by one Program Manager and one Development Officer. As numbers increase additional Development Officers are employed.

Contact hours across the Academies vary but as a general rule there are up to seven hours per week direct contact via scheduled times; ongoing mentoring and support provided by staff throughout the day and before school, at recess, lunch and after school; after school, evening and weekend sports and general activities; and numerous sports carnival, camps, excursion and tours.

Each Academy has an Academy Room allocated for the use of Academy staff and students. This room provides a central and safe environment for the girls, supports program delivery, and enables access to Academy staff who are available to provide support and guidance to the girls. The room also provides a 'home' for the girls and point of contact for parents, community and school staff. Role Models and Leaders Australia in collaboration with the host school furnishes and maintains resourcing of the room from its allocated budget resources.

Each Academy has access to available school resources such as computing and transport where available.

In general, the Academy program is embedded into the curriculum through designated timetabled sessions and access to the girls before and after school, and at recess and lunch times during each school day. The Academy program operates through a mixture of in-school and out-of-school sessions and activities.

Academy staff members provide literacy and numeracy support as part of the allocated timetabled sessions and through programs such as study skills, homework classes and study support sessions. In some cases professional tutors engaged by the school access the girls through the Academy, providing a safe and supportive environment in which to work with the girls. Mentoring in literacy and numeracy is undertaken by Academy staff, school staff and external mentors engaged by the school. Mentoring is undertaken in small group and one-on-one situations.

Assistance with post-school pathways includes providing work placements and building student's understanding of the workplace; working closely with the School-to-Work Transition Officer to ensure successful post-school transitions; helping students who are interested in working or acquiring a school-based apprenticeship; and supporting students involved in Vocational Education and Training. Academy staff members also support students through workplace visits and follow-ups. They provide ongoing support to keep the students motivated to attend their work placements, and also to maintain good attendance to ensure they keep their apprenticeships.

Gunbalanya Community School and Jabiru Area School

Gunbalanya Community School and Jabiru Area School are both part of the West Arnhem Girls Academy, which is open to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls from Year 7 to Year 12 (although the Sporting Chance funding is for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students only) and operates across both the Jabiru and Gunbalanya campuses. Each campus has a full time Development Officer while a Project Manager based at Jabiru visits Gunbalanya several times a week.

In the Academy, there is an emphasis on healthy lifestyles through sport, and the girls train for and play a variety of sports including netball, basketball and football.

There is also acknowledgement that not all girls like sports and this is taken into account when preparing the calendar of activities for the project. There is a girls' Academy room at each school where the students can meet to socialise, play

games, and study, and the room also serves as a place where girls can get help and advice from staff when difficulties or personal problems arise.

Gunbalanya offers an Academy session as part of 'Crew Day' each Friday which has a strong focus on health and wellbeing activities, including personal development and leadership, skills development and drug and alcohol awareness. At Jabiru, in addition to the girls' Academy activities on various days, the provider has also delivered a component of the health curriculum. Both schools offer before and after school activities.

Impact on students varies across the girls' Academies provided by Role Models & Leaders. The level of success is closely related to the nature of the relationship with the school. The schools report that the attendance rates and classroom behavior of those who are enrolled in the Academies have improved significantly, especially within the senior school, and that the projects have provided the incentive that has resulted in a number of students re-engaging with their studies. For example, Gunbalanya has achieved a 20 per cent increase in attendance rates for 2011, compared with 2010.

The success of the Role Models and Leaders Academies, can be attributed to:

- Having the right staff. 'Securing the right role models and staff to lead the girls. It's all about the relationship.' The essential qualities for Academy staff were said to be a passion for the task, knowledge of the local community and Indigenous context, an understanding of how to communicate with teachers and the school hierarchy, and the ability to interact positively with teenagers. With respect to relationships, it was acknowledged that without the support of the school and local communities the Academies would fail, so the ability to build respectful relations with school staff and leaders and the community was also seen as critical.
- Strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female role models from the community who are passionate and committed
- Constantly reviewing what is being done to ensure that staff do not lose sight of what they are trying to achieve; provide staff with professional development in such areas as leadership and mentoring.
- Keeping things simple – 'We don't always need to be going on big expensive trips. We can do good things locally as well' and this builds greater connection with the local community and culture.

NO SCHOOL NO PLAY

The No School No Play initiative aims to build strong partnerships between sporting organisations, parents and communities of secondary school students.

The Government has provided \$2 million to support eight National Sporting Organisations (NSO) to use sport to promote the benefits of regular school

attendance for all students. The funding will support local activities through to the end of 2012.

This funding assists sporting organisations to include a focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary school students to increase their Year 12 attainment.

This partnership with the Australian Rugby League, Australian Football League, Australian Rugby Union, Football Federation of Australia, Netball Australia, Basketball Australia, Hockey Australia, and Cricket Australia helps to engage students in their schooling.

The sporting organisations use a range of methods to increase attendance, such as player and parent school attendance pledges, sports-based reward and incentive schemes, and engaging high profile sports figures as role models.

The No School No Play initiative builds on the Australian Government's successful Sporting Chance Program, which uses students' enthusiasm for sport to improve school attendance and engagement among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Sporting organisations are taking a range of approaches to promoting the benefits of regular school attendance through sport.

As reported in the Annual Reports submitted to the department in December 2011, No School No Play projects are being delivered to some 2727 students in 218 schools across all states and territories. Of these 2727 students 2540 (93.1 per cent) are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

On average, approximately 80 per cent of NSNP participants were reported to have improved school attendance and school engagement.

No School No Play Initiatives delivered in 2011 consisted of three main components:

Reward and Incentive Initiatives: National Sporting Organisations delivered sports related activities as a reward for students demonstrating improvements in school attendance under the No School No Play Initiative. Participants were required to achieve minimum attendance targets throughout each term to be eligible to participate in reward and incentive activities. These activities consisted of skills development sessions, attendance at sporting events, coaching and developments sessions delivered by elite sporting athletes, sports camps and inter-program sports festivals.

Mentoring and Personal Development: No School No Play participants participated in a range of mentoring activities throughout 2011. Students were provided with advice and assistance relating to goals and aspirations, careers advice, health awareness and personal development.

Community Engagement: A majority of No School No Play projects were delivered in conjunction with local communities and utilised various community sources to deliver

activities in each project location. Providers utilised local sporting organisations, schools and community organisations to deliver specialised services to participants throughout 2011. In some cases, Providers sourced external funding from community organisations and business' to assist with operational costs for the delivery of No School No Play projects.

The No School No Play Initiative will cease in December 2012.

LEARN. EARN. LEGEND! PROGRAM

Under the Learn. Earn. Legend! (LEL) banner, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations funds a number of initiatives linked to sport which have as their aim the achievement of the Closing the Gap targets, in particular the Year 12 attainment and employment targets.

LEL! is a communications strategy which encourages young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to remain in education, to be aware of and explore career opportunities, and to make the move into a job that they want. As such, most LEL! projects focus on school to work transitions, with a small number being aspiration building providing, for example, information on career and job choices in expositions.

The objective of the Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) is to increase the employment outcomes and participation in economic activities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians thus contributing to the Government's commitment to halving the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment outcomes by 2018. The IEP supports the development and trialling of different approaches to improving employment outcomes, and is not a source of recurrent funding. The IEP has been used to initiate LEL! projects in recognition of their strong employment focus.

LEL! Ambassadors, including Scott Prince, Preston Campbell and Evonne Goolagong Cawley, act as role models for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The Ambassadors, the majority of whom are elite sportspeople, speak to the students about their futures and give a public face to the message of finishing education and making the move to employment.

Sport provides a means of engaging students and employers. The initiatives supported under the LEL! banner are not sporting programs, nor do they encourage students to become sports people. They are projects which encourage students, particularly those in the latter years of school, to remain engaged and to see beyond the end of school. The majority of the projects provide intensive, individual support to participant students, assisting them to realise their career goals.

Sporting partners are chosen on the basis of their appeal to young people, both male and female, and their links to the corporate sector who are able to provide work experience and employment opportunities. It is well known that female dominated sports find it difficult to attract the same level of corporate sponsorship as male dominated sports. The use of the high profile, male dominated, sporting organisations provides an opportunity for all students, both male and female, to have access to the opportunities available through the corporate links.

The majority of LEL! projects are delivered by organisations based around male dominated sports because of their capacity to provide links to a range of non-government organisations and employers who are corporate sponsors and their popular appeal to young people. Although this link to male dominated sports could be seen as a disincentive to involvement by young women, because LEL! projects are not based on participating in sport nor assume a career pathway into sport, female participation in the projects is high.

Sport appeals to both males and females, and the use of sport as a means of engagement has proved effective for both genders.

The LEL! projects use sport as a 'hook' to engage young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The sports 'hook' also provides access for the participants to the club's corporate sponsors and partners. For example, students participating in these projects may be able to access the expertise, facilities and networks of the corporate sponsors. The opportunities they receive through the projects are unlikely to have been available to them in other circumstances.

LEL! projects are an example of sporting bodies increasing opportunities for Indigenous people through the use of their networks. Participation in a school to work pathways program, access to mentoring, access to corporate networks all contribute to improved education and employment outcomes.

While LEL! projects cannot be defined as specifically 'sporting programs' in that the participants are not taking part in sporting activities, they do use sport as a means of engaging students in programs aimed at improving Indigenous education and employment outcomes. LEL! projects contribute to two of the Closing the Gap targets – halving the gap in Year 12 attainment, and halving the gap in employment outcomes and also impacts on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes through extending the time students remain at school.

The LEL! projects differ from other school to work initiatives in that they are not focused on disengaged or non-attending students. Rather, they focus on students who are attending school but who are at risk of becoming disengaged or not making a successful post-school transition. Retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students rapidly decrease over Years 10 to 12. The apparent retention rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students for Years 7/8 to Year 10 in 2011 was 98.7 per cent. This decreased to 73.3 per cent for Years 7/8 to Year 11 and 48.7 per cent for Year 7/8 to Year 12 (ABS *Schools Australia 2011*).

LEL! projects focus on these senior students in order to address the decreasing retention rates and to improve employment outcomes by providing young Indigenous people with a vision of their potential pathways beyond school. *Next Step* is a series of reports on the destinations of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the year after they complete Year 12 and illustrates the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people. Data relating to young people who completed Year 12 in 2011 shows that 22.8 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in that cohort were looking for work the year after completing Year 12, compared to 8.8 per cent of all young people in the same cohort; 17.1 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were working

part time, compared to 16.2 per cent of all young people; and 3.8 per cent were either not working or not in the labour force, compared to 1.9 per cent of all young people.

An example of a project that looks beyond the end of school is the model used by a number of rugby league clubs in Queensland. In this model suitable role models buddy with students and provide motivation, self esteem and goal setting activities during the students' final year of school and for six months post school.

Projects are aimed at students in year 10, 11 and 12. Because of the attractiveness of the sport link, it has been found that younger students in the schools where projects are run want to become involved, and the potential for involvement at a later stage in their schooling could provide encouragement for retention by younger students. Projects may also have selection or involvement criteria based around school attendance. This can also encourage improved attendance rates.

The projects demonstrate a partnership between sporting codes and organisations, the private and non-government organisation sectors and the Australian Government. These partnered organisations provide expertise and opportunities on behalf of the Australian Government and contribute to improved outcomes, not just for the participant students, but to the wider Indigenous community.

The beneficiaries of the projects are not limited to the participant students. Funding has been provided under the LEL! banner to a number of aspiration building projects which have a much wider reach. An example of this is the use of the LEL! message during the NRL Indigenous All Stars game which had a potential impact far greater than school students. It is, however, difficult to directly measure the actual impact of these types of activities. Also while the impact may not be on the viewer in respect of their own lives, the message may influence them in their attitudes to schooling for others, including their own families.

THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM: HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Health and education are fundamental to giving children the best start in life. This Government remains committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all children and is committed to ensuring they reach their full potential at school.

In Australia, school education is principally the constitutional responsibility of the state and territory government and non-government education authorities. This includes responsibility for decisions about the curriculum that is delivered in schools – including curriculum related to health and physical education.

Australia is, however, in a transition phase, with all Australian governments committed to the introduction of a common national Australian Curriculum from Foundation (the year of schooling prior to Year 1) to Year 12. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) has been established to oversee this work.

The Australian Curriculum: Health and physical education (HPE) is a core learning entitlement for all Australian children and is one of eight learning areas being

developed as part of the curriculum. Education ministers have agreed to prioritise HPE in phase three of the development of the Australian Curriculum.

Development of the HPE curriculum is currently in its early stages, with ACARA releasing its Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Health and Physical Education paper in August 2012, which will guide writing of the HPE curriculum. The HPE curriculum is expected to be finalised in late 2013.

While the Australian Curriculum for HPE is still under development, ACARA's Shape paper recognises that schools are key settings for developing health and physical education-related knowledge and skills and that the HPE curriculum is central to this.

Further information about the development of the Australian Curriculum is available at www.acara.edu.au.